

X MASSACHUSETTS COUNTY AGENT LEADER PLAN OF WORK 1949

James W. Dayton, State County Agent Leader

I. The Supervisory Situation

During 1949 the emphasis of agricultural programs will continue to be upon efficiency in farm production and farm planning, with new programs developing in the field of marketing. Work in farm efficiency, labor utilization and farm planning is now under way. Extension materials, methods and visual aids have been developed. 1949 should see efficient teaching programs in these well-established fields. Marketing will be the subject which receives the greatest new emphasis. The addition of an Extension Specialist in Fruit and Vegetable Marketing, supported by Research and Marketing Funds, has made this possible. Commodity programs, both State and county, will give emphasis to marketing topics. Subcommittees on marketing are being established and regional marketing programs combining the efforts of several adjoining counties are developing.

During the past year three resignations of associate county agricultural agents occurred in Middlesex County. Two new associate county agricultural agents were appointed in Plymouth County, one associate in Middlesex County, one assistant in Middlesex County and one associate in Worcester County to fill existing vacancies.

During 1948 three agricultural specialists were appointed. These are: Frederick E. Cole, Extension Specialist in Fruit and Vegetable Marketing; Clarence H. Parsons, Extension Dairyman, and Ellsworth H. Wheeler, Extension Entomologist. There is still a vacancy to be filled in the position of Extension Animal Pathologist.

With agricultural specialists and county agricultural agents both under the supervision of the State County Agent Leader, well coordinated programs are possible. The commodity grouping of specialists helps to bring about this coordination in fields of production, farm management, farm organization and in marketing. Some special programs, notably marketing, those affecting young farmers and veterans and agricultural policy formation, cut across commodity lines and require special development. With many young farmers assuming new responsibilities, it is important that they be given an opportunity to gain experience and to develop as leaders. A conscious effort toward the development of leadership must be recognized as part of Extension's long-term program. With the expansion of organization and the hiring of new workers, a thorough understanding of Extension's objectives and policies is essential. Responsibilities of each group must be well understood so that relationships within the organization may be satisfactory.

A large proportion of the agricultural staff is eligible for professional improvement. Arrangements must be made to provide as many opportunities as possible. Evaluation of the results of Extension Service programs and effectiveness of methods should be made by the workers themselves. There is need to further develop this type of evaluation activity.

During 1948 a committee of county managers and county trustees, working with the State office, recommended to the Massachusetts County Personnel Board a new schedule of salaries for county Extension workers. These form the basis for the new scale which was finally adopted by the Massachusetts County Personnel Board. This new salary scale has greatly improved morale among the county workers. It also makes possible the hiring of more desirable new agents and should result in a higher professional level for the entire Extension staff. The new scale does not fully compensate for increased living costs and it is possible that additional changes may be brought about during 1949. Additional increases became available for Extension specialists during 1948. For the most part the specialists' schedule is proving satisfactory.

County office space is reasonably satisfactory with the exception of Franklin County where more room should be made available. With the expansion of personnel in county Extension Services and the Soil Conservation Service, it is becoming increasingly difficult for these two services and other agricultural agencies, such as the Production and Marketing Administration and the Farmers' Home Administration, to be housed in the same building. Gradually these agencies are setting up separate office facilities.

II. Major Supervisory Problems

- A. Selecting personnel.
- B. Training new workers.
- C. Developing coordinated and well-balanced programs.
- D. Providing opportunities for the development of all county agricultural agents and agricultural specialists in subject-matter methods and skills.
- E. Maintaining good relationships, working conditions and morale.
- F. Encouraging adequate appraisal of work by each county agricultural agent and agricultural specialist.

III. Supervisory Activities

- A. Selecting Personnel. There is at present only one vacancy among Associate county agricultural agents, and one vacancy to be filled among the agricultural specialists. It is hoped that a suitable candidate for the associate county agricultural agent position in Middlesex County may be found early in the year.

The State County Agent Leader will work closely with the Head of the Department of Veterinary Science in the search for a candidate for the position of Extension Animal Pathologist.

It is expected that candidates for assistant and associate county agricultural agent positions will be more plentiful with the graduation of men now in college. Reports indicate that senior classes are much larger than in any recent year. Many of these men are reasonably mature and have had good farm experience. The new salary scale will be a help in employing them. Men with experience in Extension work or in allied fields will be offered positions as associate county agricultural agents, while those without such experience will be hired as assistant county agricultural agents.

- B. Training New Workers. In addition to the possibility of a new assistant or associate county agricultural agent in Middlesex County, there are five others who were hired in 1948. These are:

Alfred W. Carlson - Middlesex County
Herbert E. Shepard - Middlesex County
Lewis F. Norwood, Jr. - Plymouth County
Earle R. Steeves, Jr. - Plymouth County
Homor O. Mills, Jr. - Worcester County

All of these men will need training in three phases of their work:

1. Understanding of Extension objectives and policies
2. Training in teaching methods
3. Training in subject matter

A well-planned schedule of training is indicated. Part of this can be supplied by the State County Agent Leader. More of it can be furnished by specialists, and most important of all will be the guidance of older agents in their respective counties.

New workers will participate in the regular Annual Extension Conference as well as in various other conferences, both regional and State wide, of county agricultural agents and other staff members. They will spend two or three days at the University of Massachusetts early in their period of service in order to become acquainted with program procedures, Extension objectives and personnel. Special conferences for new workers will be held either on a regional basis at which new agents in all three departments will take part, or in connection with the Annual Extension Conference at which time an additional day will be given to the problems of newer workers. The various State leaders, members of the Office of Information and others will assist in such conferences.

New agents will be encouraged to attend subject-matter conferences in their particular fields. Among these will be the Union Agricultural Meetings in Worcester in January, Farm and Home Days in July in Amherst, and the Production and Outlook Conference in December in Amherst. Each State commodity committee plans at least one subject-matter conference in its particular field during the year. Participation in these will help new workers become familiar with current subject matter. Specialists will be given individual attention and help by the State County Agent Leader in the development of their programs and their understanding of Extension objectives and methods, and in the techniques of Extension teaching.

Specialists will help new agents in subject matter through personal conferences and at county subject-matter meetings. Once they are reasonably well oriented they will be given specific help in developing programs and plans of work. Commodity specialists and the State County Agent Leader will work together in developing these programs. Much dependence will be placed upon the older agents in the various counties to train and develop younger men working with them. The State County Agent Leader, with each of these older agents, will work out plans for developing new workers so as to add to their responsibilities as they acquire knowledge and skill.

- C. Developing Coordinated and Well-balanced Programs. Most agricultural programs will continue to be developed on the commodity basis as in recent years. This approach, making use of a state-wide commodity committee made up of specialists, resident staff, Experiment Station workers and county agricultural agents, achieves coordination among the specialists, between specialists and agents, and with cooperating agencies. County programs of work will continue to be developed from these state-wide recommendations through the action of county commodity committees working with the county agricultural agent and the chairman of the state commodity committee.

In the preparation of county commodity programs, a clear statement of objectives in terms of changes which farmers may make will be emphasized. These programs can also be improved through limiting the objectives to items of greatest importance. An effort will be made to achieve a continuity of program from year to year until maximum results are achieved. Emphasis will be placed upon careful selection and use of diversity of methods. In working toward these objectives, the following methods will be followed:

1. Analysis of plans of work of specialists and agents, and a review of weaknesses with individuals concerned.
2. A review of annual reports to determine progress toward objectives and discussion of these reports with the agents.

3. Individual help to those needing it, both agents and specialists.
4. Participation in the work of commodity committees at the State level.
5. Analysis of statistical reports and the publication of summaries for the help of agents and specialists.

Two relatively new developments will be encouraged. These are:

1. The planning of certain programs on a regional basis, including several adjoining counties.
2. The use of commercial concerns in forwarding educational programs.

Plans for marketing activities, covering the Connecticut Valley counties, will be developed. Cranberry marketing activities for the three south-eastern counties are also in prospect. Special meetings for such groups as feed servicemen and insecticide and fungicide dealers will be planned so that these groups may lend their support to Extension efforts.

In order that the agricultural department may work effectively, it is necessary that specialists take responsibilities for certain activities in program making and in improving teaching methods. Much of this is accomplished through committee organization, the chairman of each committee being looked upon as the leader of that particular activity. Among the responsibilities which are assigned and which will continue during 1949 are the following:

Agricultural Economics

- Roy E. Moser, Extension Economist, Farm Management

Agricultural Policy

- George W. Westcott, Extension Economist

Farm Planning and Balanced Farm Living

- Roy E. Moser, Extension Economist, Farm Management

Farm Safety

- Bellesley C. Harrington, Extension Agricultural Engineer
- Robert B. Parmenter, Extension Forester

Grain and Feed

- Ellsworth W. Bell, Extension Economist

Home Food Production

- William R. Cole, Extension Food Technologist

Marketing and Surplus Disposal

- Ellsworth W. Bell, Extension Economist
- Frederick W. Cole, Extension Specialist in Fruit and Vegetable Marketing

Young Farmers

- Lawrence V. Loy, Extension Specialist in Community Organization and Recreation.

Commodity Committees:

Cranberries - J. Richard Beattie, Extension Cranberry Specialist
Dairy - Stanley N. Gaunt, Extension Dairyman
Field Crops - Ralph M. Donaldson, Extension Agronomist
Forestry - Robert B. Parmenter, Extension Forester
Fruit - Wilbur H. Thies, Extension Horticulturist (Pomology)
Livestock - Byron L. Colby, Extension Specialist in Animal Husbandry
Poultry - Gay T. Klein, Extension Poultry Husbandman
Vegetables - Cecil L. Thomson, Extension Specialist in Vegetable Gardening

- D. Opportunities for Development of Agents and Specialists. Staff conferences for all specialists of the three departments will be held approximately once a month throughout the winter and spring. These will deal with teaching methods, objectives and policies of common interest to the entire staff. The Office of Information is planning a series of conferences on radio presentation, news writing and circular letters for agents and specialists during 1949. The Annual Extension Conference will provide an opportunity to study specific techniques and selected Extension methods.

Through the publication of "Highlights" from County Agricultural Agents' Reports, examples of good work will be brought to the attention of all agents and specialists. County agricultural agents' conferences, particularly those dealing with commodity programs, will each include a discussion of specific techniques which apply to the programs being undertaken.

Several county staffs have established a policy of studying such techniques as public speaking, the development of leadership, etc., as a group, often with an outside instructor. This policy will be encouraged and help given to any staff which may be considering such a step.

The State County Agent Leader will hold periodic conferences with each agricultural specialist and with each county agricultural agent to review with him programs which he is carrying on and the methods which he is using in connection with them. Specialists are also giving help to county agricultural agents in the use of specific methods. Some agricultural specialists are exceptionally proficient in certain techniques. They are able to give valuable help. County agricultural agents are appreciative of this. This type of help will be encouraged during the year.

For the past three years a summary of professional improvement activities of all staff members has been made. In addition to this a permanent record of professional improvement work is being kept for each worker in the State. Records indicate that an increasing amount of professional improvement work, most of it of an informal nature, is being undertaken each year. During 1949 workers will be encouraged to participate in any form of professional improvement which seems possible.

Workers will be informed of Extension Service summer schools, meetings and conferences which should prove helpful, and a special effort will be made to have county agricultural agents and agricultural specialists attend one of the summer schools for Extension workers. Where necessary, help in planning such professional improvement with local trustees will be given. The State County Agent Leader, during the coming year, will keep all workers informed of professional improvement opportunities, and will encourage each worker to carry out some specific plan and help him arrange to make this plan possible. Recognition for professional improvement will be given and a report of results from any specific professional improvement effort will be made.

Out-of-State conferences attended by agricultural specialists or county agricultural agents will be reported to other workers. Summaries of publications of special interest will be prepared, and workers will be informed of books or bulletins which make desirable reading.

E. Maintaining Good Relationships, Working Conditions and Morale.

Relationships among the various groups of workers are at a very high level. This is due in part to a thorough understanding of responsibilities.

Epsilon Sigma Phi, the society of older Extension workers, has recently prepared a leaflet entitled "Your Extension Service" for the benefit of new Extension workers. This, along with reports of recent committees on the responsibilities of agents, managers and specialists, will help new workers understand the responsibilities of various groups. Conferences with new workers also will help.

Joint conferences of agents and specialists, and a continued emphasis upon the thought that we are one staff and one organization, will help as much as any one thing to maintain good working relationships.

The County Agricultural Agents' Advisory Committee, which was established two years ago, will continue during 1949. This committee forms an added means of increasing the understanding between State and county workers and in developing common programs. Members of this year's committee are:

Stanley L. Burt - Franklin County
Walter Melnick - Hampshire County
Allister P. MacDougall - Middlesex County

State leaders in the three departments meet regularly with the Director of the Extension Service when matters of policy are under discussion, and at other times they form a working group to develop programs and techniques with which all three groups are concerned. Monthly meetings of the entire specialists' staff are planned by this group. Occasionally the three leaders, as a group, attend county staff conferences to discuss questions of policy or program affecting all workers within the

county. Certain Extension activities are organized on a basis designed to cut across department activities and include the participation of all workers. Among these are programs of rural youth, rural policy development, and some phases of marketing and consumer education.

Plans and programs will be developed in coordination with other organizations whenever such coordination will make them more effective. Close relationships will be maintained with commodity organizations, usually through the activities of commodity specialists concerned.

Cooperative programs with the Soil Conservation Service and the Production and Marketing Administration are being planned and will be carried out in the field of farm planning and winter cover crop production. Close relationships among the agricultural agencies, both State and Federal, are maintained through the meetings of the Massachusetts Agricultural Program Board.

Working conditions and morale are good throughout the State. Lack of additional secretarial help has created something of a problem among some of the specialists. This is being met through part-time help. It is hoped that during the year more permanent solutions will be worked out.

F. Encouraging Adequate Appraisal of Work by Agents and Specialists.

Each agent and each specialist is being asked to make some study of the results of some piece of Extension work being carried on by him or of the effectiveness of some particular teaching method which he is using. Agricultural specialists are including plans for this in their annual plans of work. County agricultural agents are being asked to include such a record in their annual reports. Often the two work together, for agents will help specialists in securing information on results or effectiveness. Reports will be made available to all workers of any studies in the field of evaluation which indicate the effectiveness of either methods or programs.

A committee of State and county Extension workers was appointed two years ago to aid in the field of evaluation. The State County Agent Leader serves as chairman of this group. It will continue its activity during 1949. Its principal objectives will be to stimulate interest in the appraisal of programs and methods by individual workers, to give technical advice in the planning of simple studies which may be undertaken, and to see that all Extension workers learn of results of these studies or of other studies which have an important bearing upon programs within the State. Experience with this committee indicates that in order to make it as effective as we would like to have it, more time must be available than at present appears probable.

IV. Special Assignments

Certain special activities are planned for the coming year. The State County Agent Leader will assist in the planning and organizing of work in connection with them.

- A. Marketing. Emphasis on marketing will be one of the major changes in Extension programs for 1949. Marketing subcommittees will be set up in some of the State commodity committees - certainly in fruits and vegetables. Specialists will separate marketing activities from production activities in their plans of work and in their annual reports. A regional approach to the marketing problem will be developed in the Connecticut Valley and in the southeastern section of the State. Training opportunities for county agricultural agents and for commodity specialists will be arranged so that they may become more and more familiar with marketing problems and practices. Every effort will be made to supply adequate services for marketing activities and to prepare an organization which will allow expansion.
- B. Balanced Farm Living. Preparatory steps in this program are now complete. Field work will be carried on early in 1949 on a trial basis. Reports of these trials will be studied by the committee in charge of this work and techniques will be recommended.
- C. Agricultural Policy. In 1949 the State Marketing Conference will be combined with the Production and Outlook Conference. This combined conference will be an important step in the development of agricultural policy for Massachusetts. It will be sponsored by the Massachusetts Agricultural Program Board and the Massachusetts Extension Service, and will be participated in by representatives of all agricultural organizations and agencies in the State. Their recommendations will be given local interpretation by county committees, and recommendations from the conference will be made available to all farmers in Massachusetts.

County councils will be given encouragement, and subject-matter information on agricultural policy will be made available to county agricultural agents and agricultural specialists under the leadership of George W. Westcott, Extension Economist.

- D. Young Farmers. A State committee is active in developing policies and organizing programs for older rural youth. Part of this program pertains especially to young farmers and to veterans who may be returning to farms. In most counties the newly employed associate county agricultural agents are assuming leadership of these programs. Since these men are young and usually are veterans themselves, they have been successful. At present the principal activity in this field is the development of county organizations of rural young people. During the year encouragement will be given to additional work and services for these younger farmers, particularly in the field of farm planning and farm organization.

- E. Leadership Development. Of all fields of agricultural responsibility, the field of leadership development is the one in which Extension workers most commonly feel they are making a contribution. They also feel that it is the one to which they should give additional attention.

Our past experience with agricultural leadership indicates that it may be depended upon for specific tasks whenever it can perform a real service. Commodity committees are functioning well. In the organization of artificial insemination work dairy farmers have readily assumed responsibilities and have carried them out faithfully. The use of leaders for such purposes must be continued and further developed.

The subject of leadership development will be discussed with agents individually, at staff conferences, and in connection with specific programs, especially those dealing with young farmers and with county policy groups. Program-making procedure will include definite responsibilities for farm leadership.

County agricultural agents apparently have accepted the development of rural leadership as an end in itself, rather than as a method. They will be encouraged to provide opportunities for younger men to gain experience and leadership. County agricultural agents will be asked to list their active leaders in their reports and be encouraged to report the activities of leaders in connection with specific problems.

V. Calendar and Map

January - State leaders' conference.

Union Agricultural Meetings in Worcester,

Plans of work - agents and specialists.

Annual reports - agents and specialists.

Follow-up of Annual Extension Conference

Plan of work and annual report.

Rural engineering conference at University of Massachusetts.

February - Radio schools for agents and specialists.

State leaders' conference.

Analysis of plans of work of specialists.

Conferences with new agents on organization and objectives.

March - State leaders' conference.

Specialists' conferences on major activities.

Training conferences for new agents and specialists

April - State leaders' conference

Meetings of commodity committees to plan summer programs.

Training conferences for new agents and specialists

Specialists' conferences.

- May - State leaders' conference
Conferences of county agricultural agents on summer programs.
Specialists' conference.
Days with county agricultural agents on programs and plans of work.
Develop plans with agents and specialists for appraisal of their work.
- June - State leaders' conference.
Professional improvement work for agents and specialists
Continue work with agents on programs and plans of work.
- July - State leaders' conference
Farm and Home Days in Amherst
Conferences with specialists on programs and plans of work.
- August - State leaders' conference.
Commodity programs started.
Regional conferences of agents.
- September - State leaders' conference.
State-wide conferences on commodity programs.
- October - State leaders' conference.
County plans of work.
County commodity committee work.
- November - State leaders' conference.
County annual reports.
Evaluation of activities and effectiveness.
- December - State leaders' conference.
Production and Outlook Conference and State Marketing Conference. "
Annual Extension Conference.
Annual reports.

Every Month- "Highlights"
Find personnel.
Conference with agents.
Read and use monthly reports.
Training of agents in methods.
